

(S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

18 September 1978

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[Redacted]
Deputy to DCI for Resource Management

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Dear [Redacted]

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I much appreciate having the opportunity to comment on the Space Policy Alternatives paper that has been drafted by the Space Policy Review Committee. Let me begin by making some general comments on the paper. I believe that it is a good and comprehensive job. I am in strong agreement with the projection of the evolutionary trends that will dominate the transition to the Shuttle. In highlighting why operations in space will become more, rather than less important, it might be valuable to cite another reason among those mentioned at the bottom of page one or the top of page two. Space operations will greatly increase in importance for national security purposes in an era of essential equivalence in strategic weapons between ourselves and the Soviet Union. It clearly becomes more important to know exactly what they are doing since we no longer have overwhelming military force to maintain a stable deterrent. Thus, reconnaissance and indications and warning become central pieces in the strategic balance. We will depend more heavily on information we get from space-based systems for Arms Control Limitation Treaty monitoring and the observation of crisis spots around the world. I would recommend that a statement of this kind be included.

I also agree very much with the points that have been made in PD-37 regarding the nature and the management of this nation's space program and I am glad to see them reiterated in this document. There is no question in my mind that national security must have the first priority. The only space payloads we have that have a real "social imperative" are those launched for intelligence or national defense purposes. From this it follows

NRO review(s) completed.

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that the national security sector should manage its own activities in space. This point is not made very explicitly and I would recommend that some statement be made with respect to the fact that administrative arrangements should be driven by the national security priority. For example, on pages 23 and 24 there is a discussion of Shuttle mission operations. The national security priority given in PD-37 should be much more explicitly stated. The statement about a separate mission control facility for the Shuttle, when used for national security purposes, must be strengthened. Specifically, the phrase on top of page 24, "may be needed" should be changed to "will be needed." We must have at least two mission control centers for the Shuttle because redundancy requires it. This requirement is now being established within the Defense Department.

The section dealing with technology transfer is excellent (Section III). There is no question that along with separate management of various space operations, there must be the maximum sharing of resources and technology in order that the costs of space operations be minimized to the extent possible. I especially like the examples that have been given in which technology transfer and technology sharing have worked in the past.

The statements made in the policy paper with respect to the importance of the Shuttle are good. There is no doubt that the advent of the Shuttle will change things in a most fundamental way. The Space Shuttle vehicle is the first new launch vehicle since the expendable rockets were developed in the 1930s and during World War II. I believe that we could strengthen the statements about the Shuttle in technical ways which would heighten the emphasis on major changes in technology that will be coming within the next few years. I am very gratified and pleased to see that the section on the Shuttle transition plan for national security related payloads has been adopted almost verbatim from our memorandum to Dr. Brown of 15 August 1978 (pages 24 - 27 and Tables IV and V). I believe that this is a plan we can execute in a reasonable fashion and I hope that we make the necessary commitments to do so.

Another important point in the Shuttle section is to avoid statements that the Space Shuttle will "reduce the cost of

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operating in space" (see top of page 5). The Space Shuttle will reduce the cost of getting a pound of payload in earth orbit very significantly, however, I doubt if the total cost of operating in space will come down. The best way to characterize the situation, when the Shuttle is here, is that we will be able to do much more with the same amount of money.

The structuring of alternatives for mission control of the Space Shuttle needs to be changed. Alternative (b) is incorrect. As far as I know, no one is suggesting that launch control be put at the Johnson Space Center as opposed to mission control. The point here is that launch control must be exercised from the launch site either at the Eastern Test Range or the Western Test Range. Once the vehicle is launched then control is handed over to the mission control center. The important point is that there is now only a single mission control center at the Johnson Space Center. Eventually, we must have a second one located elsewhere since military missions require redundancy in case of failure of the first and currently only mission control center. The second mission control center should be under DoD control and can be remotely located from the launch sites just as the Johnson Space Center is today. A more comprehensive position on this matter will be developed in the near future.

The discussion of classification of intelligence space programs in Section V (pages 30 - 37) is quite comprehensive. In this respect, I can only repeat what I said to you in my memorandum of September 8. I have no fundamental objection to the declassification of the "fact of" overhead photo reconnaissance. In making this statement I am also making two strict provisos:



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2. That product dissemination be very carefully thought through after the "fact of" photo reconnaissance is admitted. I am, therefore, in accord with the recommendations contained in the Policy paper regarding the release of photo reconnaissance information.

There are both risks and important benefits that would accrue from the declassification of the "fact of" overhead photo reconnaissance and from the dissemination of the product. These should be examined carefully. In doing this I would suggest that someone look at previous declassification processes where similar problems were faced that may have established useful precedents. One example is the declassification of "Project Serwood" which is the program searching for ways to control thermonuclear reactions. This project was declassified in 1958 at the request of President Eisenhower for the Atoms for Peace conference held that year in Geneva. There are some interesting similarities in the debates we had then over that matter and the debates we are having today with respect to the declassification of the "fact of" overhead photography.

Finally, I would like to say a few words about some of the other sections of the report. The government role in remote sensing is an important issue. I agree with the proposition that private enterprise needs to be encouraged by the government to get into the business of space applications. But a vigorous government program is necessary if this is to happen. In the area of space sciences I would like to see more emphasis on astrophysics. I believe there is good reason to expect that really fundamental new discoveries about the nature of matter, under unusual conditions, will be made through the investigation of things such as "black holes," quasars, Seyfert galaxies and other recently discovered celestial objects. Finally, the action on new opportunities in space should be expanded. I agree that a solar power station is not a good idea at the present time. However, the hardware that is being created in the Space Shuttle program is definitely applicable to new things,

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SUBJECT: Space Policy

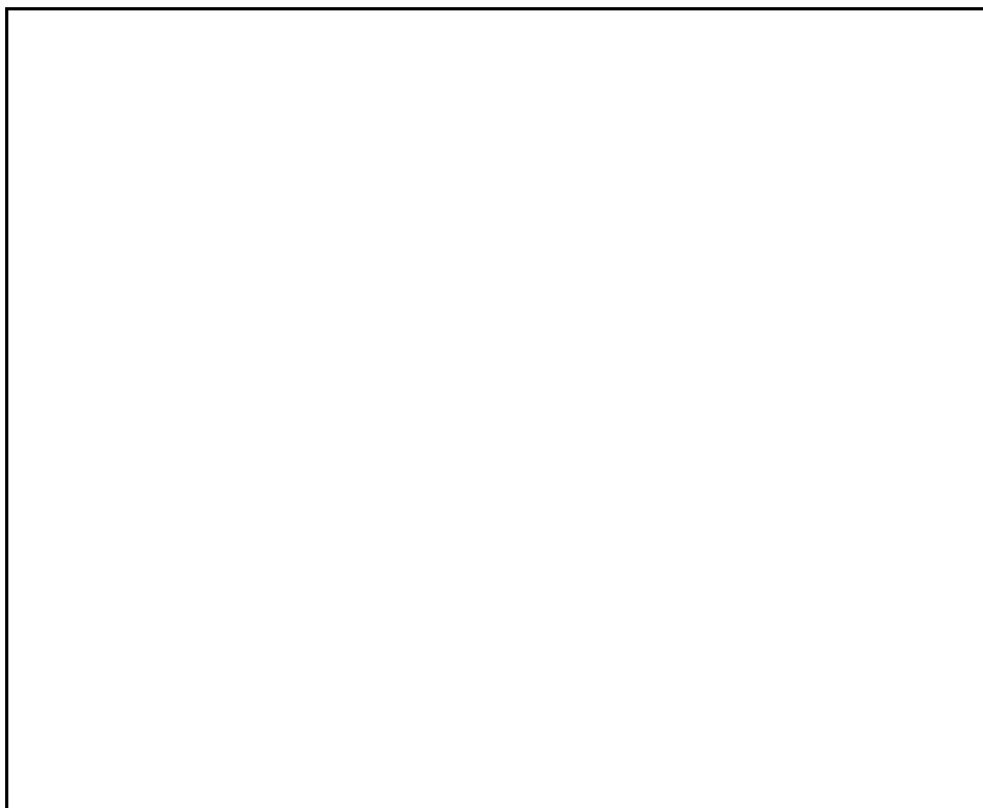
Alternatives Paper

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